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In the service of the Jewish state

By Shraga Elam and Dennis Whitehead

In the late 1940s, Walther (Walter) Rauff, an SS officer who was responsible for the murder of at least 100,000 people and was wanted by the Allies as a war criminal, was employed by the Israeli secret service. Instead of bringing him to justice it paid him for his services and helped him escape to South America. Documents of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) that have been released over the past several years show that the Americans were aware that Rauff's case was not exceptional.

A CIA memorandum dated March 24, 1950 describes the relations between the Israel agent Edmond (Ted) Cross, whose name is deleted on this document, and a Nazi named Janos Walberg: "Subject's engagement be [sic] the Israeli Intelligence Service would fit into the picture as revealed by talks with X with [Edmond (Ted) Cross a.k.a. Magen or Crowder] consisting in the utilization of former Nazi elements for observation and penetration in the Arab countries. The attempt to send the well-known former SS Colonel Walter Rauff to Egypt having failed, the Israeli Service with all probability (however this has not yet been confirmed) had engaged Subject [Walberg], whose sentiments and past would arouse no suspicions in Egypt that he is a Jewish agent."

An earlier document, from February 1950, states that Cross helped Rauff obtain

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the necessary papers for immigration to South America, even though the attempt to send him to Egypt had failed. Why, though, did Israel help Rauff? This document provides a hint: "It is not improbable that Subject's presence in Syria was in connection with a mission for the Israel[i] service." Rauff was indeed in Syria, serving as military adviser to President Hosni Zaim, who sought a peace agreement with Israel. Rauff was forced to leave after Zaim was deposed in a military coup.

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The mission Rauff was to have carried out in Egypt is not known, but his connection with Cross may supply more than a hint. According to research by Ruth Kimche, a former Mossad employee, Cross was sent in July 1948, as the War of Independence raged, to assassinate several key figures in Egypt with the help of a group of Jews. At the last minute the mission was called off. Cross returned to Egypt in September, but again the plan was not executed, probably because he became entangled in a love affair with the Egyptian Princess Amina Nur a-Din and had to leave the country. According to Kimche, "The whole story is very reminiscent of the Lavon Affair of the 1950s, except that fortunately for them the 1948 plan was not implemented, apparently thanks to the Egyptian princess."

But the plan was not jettisoned, either. In 1949, as the U.S. documents show, Cross wanted to send Rauff to Egypt. According to another document in Rauff's CIA file, Rauff did not reach Egypt, but a 1953 memorandum quotes the U.S. ambassador to Egypt as saying that a man named Rauff was in the country. True, the memorandum describes this Rauff as a Pole, but it also notes that he organized the extermination of Jews in Poland, making it very likely that the reference is to the famous Nazi officer.

Rauff was born in 1906. He served in the German Navy from the age of 18. In 1937 he was dismissed for conduct unbecoming an officer due to adultery. A close friend and fellow former naval officer, Reinhard Heydrich, who was then deputy commander of the SS under Heinrich Himmler, helped get him into the Nazi organization. Initially Rauff served in SS headquarters in Berlin. After the conquest of Norway in 1940 he headed the security police there for three

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21:13 Sneh: Settlers to be removed from Hebron building within two weeks

21:18 U.K. sailors say were threatened with prison if they didn't confess

18:46 Aides press Olmert to fire Finance Minister Hirschson over graft probe

16:34 Jordan's King to convene parliament on draft nuclear law

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months. That year he was reinstated in the Navy, at his request, and commanded a fleet of minesweepers, but in 1941 Heydrich summoned him back to SS headquarters.

When Heydrich was appointed governor of occupied Czechoslovakia, Rauff accompanied him to Prague as his technical assistant. He returned to Berlin in June 1942, after Heydrich's assassination by the Czech resistance. Rauff was appointed head of the SS Technical Department and was responsible for the project of extermination using gas vans. After Jews and others were herded into the back of a gas van, the vehicle was sealed and the exhaust pipe introduced into the back. When the engine was turned on the fumes killed everyone in the back of the vehicle. Between 97,000 and 200,000 people, most of them Jews, were murdered in this way. This method of mass murder was too slow and cumbersome for the Nazis, however, who went on to develop the gas chambers using Zyklon B as the killing agent.

From July 1942 until May 1943, Rauff also commanded the Einsatzkommando (a unit of the Einsatzgruppen, the mobile killing squads that were in charge of annihilating Jews) in North Africa and was responsible for concentrating the Jews in Tunisia. In July 1943, after a brief stay in Berlin, he was made commander of the Einsatzkommando in Corsica, and from September 1943 until the end of the war was the SS Kommandant in Milan. As such, he took part in the secret negotiations that led to the surrender of the Nazis in northern Italy.

Rauff, unlike other Nazis who participated in the talks, was arrested by the Allies on April 30, 1945. In 1947 he escaped and was recruited for Syrian intelligence by Captain Akram Tabara, who gave his name as Dr. John Homsî.

Rauff advised President Hosni Zaim in Syria and was arrested on the day of the coup against him. Rauff managed to convince his captors that he was only an adviser and had no command powers; he was released but ordered to leave the country.

According to one of the versions in the CIA files, Rauff was suspected of ties to "subversive Communist activity," as the agent of a German named Von Lipkau. After Rauff's expulsion from Syria, he was supposed to accompany Lipkau to India to disseminate Communist propaganda. According to one CIA report, the mission was aborted because Lipkau remained in Tel Aviv due to other commitments.

From Damascus Rauff went to Beirut, and from there to Italy. With the assistance of Israeli, and apparently also British intelligence, he sailed for South America in December 1949. He settled in Quito, the capital of Ecuador. A 1953 report put him in Buenos Aires, where he probably headed an anti-Communist group. In 1958 Rauff moved to Chile, obtaining permanent residency status there a year later. He became a cattle and fish merchant and was described as a rancher and an industrialist. His son, also named Walter, was accepted to the Chilean naval

academy and was the protege of Chief of Staff General Carlos Prats, a supporter of the socialist President Salvador Allende. The son denies that his father ever worked for Israel.

On December 19, 1962, Rauff was arrested in Chile after West Germany requested his extradition. Chile's Supreme Court refused the request and released Rauff. Allende's election as president did not change the situation: in a friendly letter to Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal Allende wrote that he could not reverse the court's 1962 decision.

In September 1973, Allende was killed in a military coup against his democratically elected government. A few months later, the French paper Le Monde reported that Rauff was appointed head of Chile's intelligence service; the report was denied by the Chilean government. Ten years later, in January 1984, Chile turned down an extradition request for Rauff from Israel's Justice Ministry. A month later, West Germany repeated its extradition request. Chile said the case would be reopened only if it were presented with evidence of new crimes. Extraditing Rauff would not serve any public interest in Chile, the court said, since he had lived in the country for many years and his behavior was always beyond reproach.

The U.S. government got into the act, emphasizing to Chile its conviction that Nazi criminals must face trial. The Santiago government came under heavy international pressure to extradite Rauff. Both President Ronald Reagan and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher addressed the issue in 1984, but their comments did not impress Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet. The Nazi hunter Beate Klarsfeld traveled to Chile to organize protests over the issue and was arrested twice for disturbing the peace.

Then director general of Israel's Foreign Ministry, David Kimche, visited Santiago in 1984. The press reported that he urged his hosts to deport Rauff, whom he described as one of the major war criminals living in a Western country. His wife, Ruth Kimche, said on behalf of her husband that he does not recall this; they were in Chile on a private visit, she says. The sincerity of the Israeli efforts toward Rauff's capture can be gauged from the fact that already in 1979 Israel sold patrol boats to Chile and then overhauled Chilean war planes, and in 1984 was still assisting with their maintenance.

Rauff died of lung cancer in May 1984. The statement issued by the Israeli embassy sounded like a sigh of relief: "The problem with Mr. Rauff is now solved. God has tried him."

The fact that Rauff supplied intelligence to Israel has been published before, but for some reason the reports did not generate a public debate over the moral implications of Israel's providing protection to a major Nazi criminal, who was the subject of an international campaign by Nazi hunters Simon Wiesenthal and Beate Klarsfeld to bring him to trial. Similarly, the renowned U.S. Holocaust

researcher Richard Breitman, who as director of historical research for the Nazi War Criminal Records Interagency Working Group reviewed Rauff's CIA file, chose to ignore information indicating that Israeli intelligence systematically employed Nazis in Arab countries.

According to CIA records Rauff's handler was Ted Cross, whose Hebrew name was David Magen. Cross was recruited in 1948 for clandestine activity by Asher Ben-Natan, director of operations in the Foreign Ministry's Political Department, which served as the precursor to the Mossad. Cross was fluent in several languages and had served in British intelligence in World War II.

According to an article by Gil Meltzer in the daily Yedioth Ahronoth from a year ago, Cross - who was from a wealthy Jewish Budapest family named Gross - was an international adventurer, a hedonist and a womanizer. To pay for his flashy lifestyle, he dealt in drugs. When Israel discovered that he had also sold his services as an agent to Egypt - for the very handsome sum of \$20,000 - he was arrested and sentenced to a lengthy prison term. After his release he went into the restaurant business and, among other things, helped found the Wimpy's hamburger chain.

Can the Israeli government be blamed for the ties between Cross and Rauff, or was this a private initiative by the double agent? The CIA, it turns out, did not know some important details about Rauff's connections with Israeli intelligence.

In Passover of 1993, Shlomo Nakdimon published an interview with Shalhevet Freier in Yedioth Ahronoth. In the late 1940s Freier was a branch director in the Foreign Ministry's Political Department, and in the 1970s he chaired the Israel Atomic Energy Commission. He has since died. In the interview he related how he had recruited Rauff in Italy, after friends in the Italian Foreign Ministry tipped him off about the new arrival. Rauff was using an alias at the time. According to Freier, then, it was the Political Department that employed Rauff; there is no mention of Cross in his interview.

Freier told Nakdimon that Ben-Natan and the director of the Political Department, came to Italy especially "in order to watch the adviser to the president of Syria enter the house of their man in Rome." Freier introduced himself to Rauff as a representative of Israeli intelligence. For an entire month the Nazi criminal sat and wrote a report on Syria's military deployment.

"When he didn't know the answer to a question, Rauff called friends in Syria for additional information," Freier said. The Israeli government not only paid Rauff, but also arranged for a legitimate Italian visa. Rauff, his wife and their children sailed from Genoa to South America. He handed Freier the last part of the report in the port.

The CIA received information that Rauff had acted on behalf of British intelligence in Syria and gave his handlers a copy of the Syrian intelligence

service and political police reorganization plan. He seems to have been the servant of several masters at once. According to the CIA documents, in November 1949 Rauff arrived in Rome from Beirut and stayed at the Pensione Telentino under the name of Walter Ralf. Sources at the hotel said that he had little money and lived frugally. He had no visitors and received only a few telephone calls. A Catholic priest known for his Nazi leanings gave Rauff 40,000 lire. On December 17, 1949, Rauff set sail for Ecuador. Both the ticket and his passport were supplied by either Israeli or British intelligence.

In January 1950, Cross told CIA agents that Rauff had left Italy and had severed his ties with Israeli intelligence, but had left behind many interesting documents. Cross promised to bring them to the next meeting, but the agents did not really believe him.

Freier said in the interview that Rauff continued to write to him. He told Nakdimon that he maintained contact with the Nazi "because I thought that one day I might need him. The Arabs trusted him."

Ben-Natan, who later served as director general of the Defense Ministry and ambassador to France and to Germany, now confirms that Freier employed Rauff but says he received a report from him to this effect only post factum. In retrospect, Ben-Natan today believes it was a mistake to forge ties with the Nazi criminal, but emphasizes that he provided very important material.

In the memoirs he published five years ago, Ben-Natan has a different account. He writes that Freier "succeeded in sending to Syria a former Nazi officer, who upon his return brought information about the deployment of the Syrian army." Ben-Natan confirms that the officer was Rauff, but is not absolutely certain which version is correct. In writing the book, he says, he relied solely on his memory.

What did the Israelis who hired Rauff know about his past? Were they aware of the gravity of his crimes? Asked by Nakdimon whether he knew at the time that Rauff was responsible for the gas-vans and the death of up to 200,000 people, Freier said he was not: "I asked him about his past, and he claimed that he had been the Gestapo official in charge of forging British pounds in order to subvert the British economy. Only years later did I hear on the radio that the Americans, after decoding files of senior Nazis, stated that Rauff had been in charge of all the engineering activity of the Gestapo."

It is difficult to believe that Freier did not know who he was recruiting. On May 2, 1945, many newspapers reported that "the infamous Colonel Rauff, the long-sought head of the SS in Milan, was captured." On October 19, 1945, Rauff, in American captivity, signed a sworn declaration admitting his involvement in killing Jews in the gas-vans. This document was submitted at the Nuremberg trials, together with a letter from his subordinate, Dr. August Becker, which contained a report about technical problems in the mass murder of the Jews. Apart from this, Rauff's name appears 31 times in the transcripts of the

Nuremberg trials. This information was readily available: all one had to do was contact Dr. Robert Kempner, an American Jew who was the deputy chief prosecutor at Nuremberg, or the Jewish observers who followed the trials. Ben-Natan, who collected material about Nazi war criminals during this period in Europe, confirms that this information was available.

Rauff's mention in connection with the SS project to forge British banknotes calls into question another operation in which Freier was involved. At the end of the war, a Jew named Jacques Van Harten, one of the central agents of the forgery project, contacted Jewish soldiers from Palestine in northern Italy and offered them large quantities of forged banknotes in return for protection. (An article about this episode appeared in this magazine in 2000.)

In addition to large sums of money, Van Harten was also in possession of a large quantity of jewelry. Shmuel Ossia, an associate of Freier, testified that Freier interrogated Van Harten at length about his past. Ossia remembers seeing the frightened Van Harten in the corridor during the interrogation, which went on for a few days. Van Harten undoubtedly related how he had helped Himmler's special envoy, Kurt Becher, who was in charge of plundering the property of Hungarian Jewry, and revealed what he knew about the source of the forged British money, which later, thanks to Van Harten, would become a crucial source of funding for the illegal immigration and arms purchasing operations of the Haganah, the forerunner of the Israel Defense Forces.

The extent of Freier's awareness of Van Harten's deeds is shown not only by the commanders of the illegal immigration project (Aliyah Bet), but also by the fact that in an interview to the historian Nana Sagi in 1966, he said with feigned innocence that he did not understand how no reference was made to Van Harten in the Kastner and Eichmann trials. Sagi did not ask Freier why he did not use his extensive connections to address the issue.

The Americans arrested Van Harten in Italy, on suspicion of abetting the escape of Nazi war criminals. The Mossad l'Aliya Bet - the clandestine organization of the Jewish community in pre-1948 Palestine, which was in charge of the illegal immigration of Jews to the country - tried to obtain Van Harten's release. Yitzhak Tamari, a soldier in the Haganah who knew why Van Harten had been arrested, protested to the commander of the Haganah unit in Italy, Eliahu Ben Hur (Cohen). Ben Hur, who later became a major general in the IDF, told Tamari that Van Harten had been promised protection and a gentleman always keeps his word.

Following Van Harten's release, in 1946, Ben Hur instructed his father, Abba Cohen, Tel Aviv's fire chief, to help Van Harten acclimatize. Van Harten opened a jewelry store on Nahalat Binyamin Street, near the Carmel produce market. Abba Cohen later got a job in one of Van Harten's businesses. Van Harten died in 1973, a respected businessman and a resident of the upscale community of Savyon who during the war had used his money and connections to save Jews

and smuggle out valuables for them, particularly jewelry. His family stuck to this account even after the publication of the article in 2000. The jewelry store, by the way, closed down soon after the article appeared.

Freier also helped Van Harten in 1947, when the British wanted to deport him. He put him in touch with the Jerusalem lawyer Mordechai Eliash and was probably also responsible for a letter sent to the British by Golda Meyerson (Meir), as the acting foreign minister of the Jewish Agency, stating that Van Harten was under the protection of the pre-State Jewish community, the Yishuv, because he had ostensibly helped save Jews.

But Van Harten was small fry compared to Rauff, who was a criminal on the same scale as Eichmann. It is thus not surprising that Klarsfeld, who invested considerable efforts to bring Rauff to trial, almost slammed down the telephone receiver when she heard that he had been employed by Israeli intelligence and had received its assistance in escaping to Europe. "In 1984, when I campaigned in Chile for Rauff's extradition, I had no knowledge of so-called 'contacts' between him and the Mossad," Klarsfeld wrote in an e-mail. "I doubt that it could have been possible, because Rauff was well-known in the Jewish world for his role in the gassing program by trucks and also because he persecuted the Jews of Tunisia when he was head of the Nazi police in Tunisia, and he persecuted the Jews in Italy when he was head of the Nazi police in Milano." Similarly, the director of the Israeli office of the California-based Simon Wiesenthal Center, Dr. Ephraim Zuroff, finds it improbable that Freier did not know about Rauff's crimes. W

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| 3. This is only tip of iceberg | 15:11 Khalid | 31/03/07 |
| 4. Disgusting | 17:33 Mitch Cohen | 31/03/07 |
| 5. why is nessary to put all this stuf on the table? | 17:41 alberto susterman | 31/03/07 |
| 6. In the service of the Jewish state | 19:01 Derbig Mooser | 31/03/07 |

| | | |
|---|-------------------------|----------|
| 7. If the names were crossed out/removed as stated | 19:22 Ari ben Yisrael | 31/03/07 |
| 8. George Bush the first | 20:11 Marilyn | 31/03/07 |
| 9. In the service of the Jewish state | 20:22 L. Gomberoff | 31/03/07 |
| 10. fake image | 20:59 yuval | 31/03/07 |
| 11. employee rauff | 21:17 honey bunch | 31/03/07 |
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